

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00
NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 OMB-01 IO-13
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-----281108Z 112974 /12

O R 281010Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1932
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMCONSUL KARACHI
AMCONSUL LAHORE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ISLAMABAD 5541

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PK, US, PINT
SUBJECT: PRESS ATTACK ON FORMER POLITICAL COUNSELOR

1. THE MORNING OF MAY 28, CHARGE CALLED ON FOREIGN SECRETARY
TO LEAVE NOTE PROTESTING PAKISTAN TIMES ARTICLE (SENT SEPTTEL)
ATTACKING FORMER POLITICAL COUNSELOR HOWARD SCHAFER. REFLECTING POINTS

CONTAINED IN NOTE, CHARGE SAID THAT THE COMMENTARY IS REplete
WITH FALSE AND MISLEADING STATEMENTS WHICH MALIGNED MR. SCHAFER.
HE ADDED THAT AS A PRESS TRUST PAPER, THE PAKISTAN TIMES IS
HIGHLY RESPONSIVE TO THE DIRECTION OF THE GOVERNMENT. MOST
DISTURBING IS THAT THE ARTICLE APPEARED JUST PRIOR TO SCHEDULED
MEETING BETWEEN SECRETARY VANCE AND THE FOREIGN MINISTER. IT
RUNS CONTRARY TO THE GOP'S STATED INTENTION TO ESTABLISH AN
ATMOSPHERE WHICH WOULD BE CONDUCIVE TO CONSTRUCTIVE
DISCUSSIONS IN PARIS.

2. AGHA SHAHI WAS OBVIOUSLY EMBARRASSED BY THE
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ARTICLE AND, COMPARED WITH PREVIOUS MEETINGS WITH HIM
ON THE SUBJECT OF ANTI-AMERICAN CAMPAIGN, HE WAS MORE
ILL-AT-EASE AND DEFENSIVE. HE IMMEDIATELY STATED THAT THE XYZ PIECE
WAS WRITTEN BY H.K.BURKI, THE FOREIGN SECRETARY THEN ASKED IF THE
CONVERSATION BETWEEN SCHAFER AND A SENIOR DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT
FOR THE PAKISTAN TIMES AND OUR JOURNALISTIC BETE NOIRE PAKISTANI
ON THE REPROCESSING PLANT AS REPORTED IN THE ARTICLE WAS

FALSE. CHARGE REPLIED THAT HE CERTAINLY BELIEVED SO, AND WE HAD NO EVIDENCE WHATSOEVER THAT SUCH A CONVERSATION EVER TOOK PLACE. THE FOREIGN SECRETARY REPLIED THAT IF IT IS FALSE, OUR PROTEST WOULD CERTAINLY BE JUSTIFIED.

3. CHARGE ALSO POINTED OUT THAT NAMING SCHAFER AS ONE OF THE TWO AMERICAN DIPLOMATS WHOSE PHONE CONVERSATION WAS TAPED INDICATED HE RECEIVED THIS INFORMATION FROM OFFICIAL SOURCES. AGHA SHAHI REPLIED HE WOULD LOOK INTO THIS MATTER AS WELL.

4. CHARGE SAID THAT HE HAD HOPPED AFTER HIS TALK WITH THE PRIME MINISTER THAT EVERY EFFORT WOULD BE MADE BY THE GOP TO ESTABLISH AN ATMOSPHERE CONDUCIVE TV CONSTRUCTIVE TALKS IN PARIS. HOWEVER, ALL THE RECENT SIGNS POINT TO A CONTINUATION OF THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST US. FOR EXAMPLE, OVER THE PAST FIVE DAYS, FOUR FEDERAL MINISTERS HAVE CRITICIZED US IN SPEECHES, AND WE HAVE HAD A DEMONSTRATION AT OUR USIS CENTER IN RAWALPINDI IN CONTRAVENTION OF PAKISTANI LAW. IT WOULD CONSEQUENTLY BE VERY DIFFICULT FOR CHARGE TO REPORT TO SECRETARY VANCE THAT A CONCILIATORY ATMOSPHERE IS BEING ESTABLISHED IN PAKISTAN. THE FOREIGN SECRETARY SAID THAT WE SHOULD NOT CONSIDER THAT AN ARTICLE BY A "REFRACTORY" JOURNALIST NEGATES THE ASSURANCES WE HAD RECEIVED FROM THE PRIME MINISTER. CHARGE REPLIED THAT WE HAVE SEEN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE GOP AND THE PRESS TRUST AND FULLY REALIZE THAT MOST OF THE ARTICLES EITHER REFLECT OR DO NOT CONFLICT WITH GOVERNMENT POLICY. AGHA SHAHI DEMURRED AND SAID THAT CONFIDENTIAL

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OFTEN ARTICLES APPEAR TO WHICH THE GOP TAKES EXCEPTION. CHARGE REPLIED THAT IF THAT IS SO, IT WOULD BE HELPFUL IF THE GOVERNMENT SOMETIME WOULD PUBLICLY AND OFFICIALLY CORRECTED ERRONEOUS OR MISLEADING REPORTS IN THE NEWSPAPER.

5. AGHA SHAHI OBVIOUSLY FELT ON THE DEFENSIVE BECAUSE OF THE BURKI ARTICLE AND LAUNCHED INTO A LONG EXPLANATION OF HOW HE OFTEN CALLS BURKI INTO HIS OFFICE AND ASKS HIM TO AVOID PRINTING ANYTHING THAT MIGHT GIVE PERSONAL OFFENSE OR BE EMBARRASSING TO THE GOVERNMENT. THE FOREIGN SECRETARY SAID HE HAS CONTINUALLY TOLD BURKI THAT HE PUTS THE MINISTRY IN A DIFFICULT POSITION AND BURKI HAS APOLOGIZED TO SHAHI IN THE PAST FOR SOME OF HIS ARTICLES. SHAHI ADDED THAT THE STATEMENT IN THE ARTICLE THAT SCHAFER WAS WITHDRAWN BY THE USG WAS NOT TAKEN FROM GOP SOURCES SINCE HE KNEW THIS CHARGE WAS NOT TRUE. HE ALSO ADDED THAT THE GOP HAS BEEN VERY EMBARRASSED BY BURKI'S CRITICISMS OF PRESIDENT CARTER WHOM PAKISTAN RESPECTS AND ADMIRES.

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C R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT PARA 8)

6. CHARGE CLOSED THE MEETING BY REEMPHASIZING THAT SUCH ARTICLES APPEARING AT THIS TIME, IN ADDITION TO STATEMENTS BY FEDERAL MINISTERS CRITICIZING US, DO NOT ESTABLISH A POSITIVE ATMOSPHERE FOR THE TALKS IN PARIS. SHAHI EVADED THIS POINT AND REITERATED HIS EARLIER STATEMENT THAT WE SHOULD GO BY WHAT THE PRIME MINISTER TOLD CHARGE RATHER THAN WHAT WE READ IN THE PRESS.

7. ONE AND A HALF HOURS AFTER THIS MEETING, ACTING DCM, IN ABSENCE OF CHARGE WHO WAS TEMPORARILY UNAVAILABLE, MET WITH FOREIGN SECRETARY, AT LATTER'S BEHALF. SHAHI SAID HE HAD JUST SPOKFN TO BURKI AND TOLD HIM HIS ARTICLE WAS UNFORTUNATE. IT DID NOT HELP THE GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS TO ESTABLISH AN AMICABLE ATMOSPHERSCE FOR THE TALKS IN PARIS. SHAHI ALSO TOLD BURKI THAT THE AMERICAN EMBASSY HAD TAKEN STRONG EXCEPTION TO THE ARTICLE.

8. FOREIGN SECRETARY SAID THAT BURKI VEHEMENTLY DENIED
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THAT ARTICLE WAS MENDACIOUS. BURKI SAID THAT SCHAFFER HAS BEEN MOST INDISCREET, THAT HE HAD "TALKED WITH EVERYONE", THAT HE HAD THE CONVERSATION ABOUT REPROCESSING THAT WAS INCLUDED IN THE ARTICLE WITH ANOTHER JOURNALIST, AND THAT BURKI COULD PROVE IT. BURKI ALSO SAID THAT HE DETERMINED THROUGH HIS CONTACTS AND BY "PUTTING TWO AND TWO TOGETHER" IT WAS PROBABLY SCHAFFER WHO WAS ONE OF THE TWO US DIPLOMATS QUOTED IN ARTICLE. HE ADDED HE COULD PROVE ALL HIS CHARGES AGAINST SCHAFFER.

9. FOREIGN SECRETARY TOLD ADCM HE SAID TO BURKI THAT THE GOP ATTACHES GREAT IMPORTANCE TO THE TALKS IN PARIS AND DID NOT WANT THE ATMOSPHERE CLOUDED. HE ADDED THAT THE MFA HAS A DIFFICULT TIME EXPLAINING BURKI ARTICLES TO THE US EMBASSY. BURKI REPORTEDLY REPLIED THAT HE IS NOT AGAINST A DIALOGUE WITH THE US AND WANTS TO SEE AN HONORABLE ACCOMMODATION WITH THE UNITED STATES. HOWEVER, HE STANDS BY HIS STORY.

10. ACTING DCM SAID HE APPRECIATED HEARING THE FOREIGN SECRETARY'S ACCOUNT OF THIS CONVERSATION WITH BURKI. HE DID HAVE TWO POINTS HE WANTED TO MAKE, HOWEVER, FIRST, THAT HE HAD WORKED FOR THREE YEARS WITH MR. SCHAFFER AND HE CANNOT BELIEVE SCHAFFER WAS INDISCREET. HE ADDED THAT WE HAD NO OFFICER IN OUR MISSION MORE CAREFUL IN HIS CONVERSATIONS AND ACTIONS THAN SCHAFFER, AND WE CANNOT BELIEVE THE CHARGES BURKI HAS MADE. SECOND, APPARENTLY THE GOP'S POSITION IS DIFFERENT THAN BURKI'S. HOWEVER, WE HAVE NEVER SEEN ANY CLARIFICATION OR CORRECTION ISSUED BY THE GOP WHEN THERE ARE FALSE OR MISLEADING STORIES IN THE PAKISTAN TIMES ABOUT THE UNITED STATES. THE NEWSPAPER READERS MAY THEN WELL ASSUME THAT THE PAPER AND ITS COLUMNISTS ARE REFLECTING AN OFFICIAL GOP POSITION.

11. SHAHI THEN DELIVERED LONG MONOLOGUE REPEATING TO
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THE ADCM MANY OF THE POINTS HE HAD MADE EARLIER TO CHARGE ABOUT BURKI'S UNRELIABILITY. HE CLOSED BY SAYING THAT IT WAS MOST DIFFICULT TO DEAL WITH A "RECALCITRANT" JOURNALIST, AND IT WAS HIS VIEW THAT IT WOULD BE COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE AND CONTRARY TO OUR MUTUAL INTERESTS TO PURSUE THE ALLEGATIONS AGAINST SCHAFFER ANY FURTHER.

12. COMMENT. WE BELIEVE AGHA SHAHI DID NOT KNOW IN ADVANCE THIS SPECIFIC ARTICLE WAS GOING TO APPEAR AND WAS CONSEQUENTLY TAKEN ABACK BY ITS PUBLICATION. THROUGHOUT

BOTH CONVERSATIONS HE SPENT MOST OF THE TIME CRITICIZING
BURKI FOREHIS "IRRESPONSIBILITY" AND WAS LESS OBDURATE THAN
IN PREVIOUS TALKS. HE WAS CAREFUL, HOWEVER, TO AVOID
ADDRESSING THE CENTRAL ISSUE. EVEN THOUGH THE FOREIGN
SECRETARY ASSURED US THAT THE GOP DOES NOT WANT TO DAMAGE
THE ATMOSPHERE FOR THE PARIS TALKS, NEVERTHELESS SUCH
STORIES COULD NOT APPEAR AND FEDERAL MINISTERS COULD NOT
PUBLICLY CRITICIZE US IF BURKI, THE MINISTERS AND OTHERS
DID NOT FEEL THAT THE PRIME MINISTER WOULD, AT THE
LEASE, ACQUIESCE IN SUCH ATTACKS ON THE UNITED
STATES.

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